

MARRIAGE IN THE ROMAN IMPERIAL PERIOD

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Study of the philosophical texts produced during the early empire, especially the Stoic ones, suggests that a change in the relationship between spouses had started to take place in the minds of the male members of the Roman elite. There was, of course, no radical change of view which perceived marriage as one of the pillars of society, but the Stoics pursued the matter with much more eagerness than the 5th and 4th century BC Greek philosophers. Their texts have been studied by M. Foucault, who devoted a whole chapter of his book, *The Care of the Self*, Vol 3, to the analysis of the Stoic concept of marriage¹. His conclusion was that Musonius Rufus, Plutarch, *et al.*, had developed a concept of ideal marriage in which husband and wife were united in body and soul, a bond which was much stronger than the one which existed between spouses in classical Athens. Foucault presents his thesis brilliantly but limits himself to philosophy because he was interested in writing a history of ideas, rather than a social history.

It is true that Stoics do not fall short of praising marriage and the *homonoia* between husband and wife. Musonius Rufus disregarded wealth, high birth and physical beauty as pre-requisites for marriage², and Plutarch seems to agree, as

¹ M. Foucault, *The history of sexuality III: The care of the Self*, translated by R. Hurley, London 1986.

² C. Lutz ed., «Musonius Rufus, the Roman Socrates», *Yale Classical Studies* 1947, 91.

he presents a story of a Roman who rejected a virtuous, wealthy and beautiful woman as his wife because he suspected she could be a nuisance. He advises that wives should not rely on the 'power given to them by their dowries or their high birth or their beauty but on their moral qualities'³. In a similar tone, Dio Chrysostom praises the simplicity and beauty of the (much idealised) marriage between the offspring of Euboean rustics, while at the same time pouring scorn upon the luxurious but morally poor marriages of the rich, based only on material prospects and conducted by the *proxenetrae*, in his seventh discourse.

Both Musonius Rufus and Epictetus are at pains to prove that marriage and philosophy can be combined. Rufus presents examples of renowned philosophers of the classical past who were married: Pythagoras, Crates, Socrates. (Though he omits the story that Socrates' married life was not so happy and the negligence of his job for street philosophy was one of the reasons for Xanthippe's nagging.) Like all the people who want to prove that they are right, he mentions only the facts that corroborate his theory, ie that Crates had a wife who shared his wretched life as a homeless beggar living in the porticos of Athens without complaint⁴. And he rejects further arguments that philosophy and marital relationships are irreconcilable. His argument is that if the homeless Crates could manage it, you gentlemen who have homes and even slaves to work for you, you have no excuses to avoid supporting a wife. Epictetus admits that married life can be hard as the husband might be required to help with household chores, accompany his children to school, provide services for his father-in-law, and the essentials for his wife to live on (wool, oil, a bed, a cup)⁵. But he concludes that it is the duty of humans to help not only themselves but others too. And if you refuse to do so on a private scale, you will refuse to do so on a public scale, too, and therefore you will become a bad citizen. But Epictetus simultaneously kept on advocating a Cynic way of life, and Cynics rejected marriage and family altogether, as they practised an anarchistic way of life. Diogenes, the most well-known figure of Cynicism, did not like women: a first century AD graffito from Rome records that when he saw a woman drowning in a river, he commented that it was a good thing that a bad thing was going to be destroyed in a bad way by another bad thing⁶.

³ Plutarch., *Conjugalia*, 141. 22.

⁴ C. Lutz ed., «Musonius...», 91-92.

⁵ Epictetus, *The Discourses as reported by Arrian, the Manual and Fragments*, translated by A. Oldfather, Cambridge 1926-28, III. 19-20, 26-28.

⁶ *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum (SEG) XXVI*, 1976/77, n° 1138, Herculaneum, first century AD.

In their moralistic texts, Stoics emphasised that husbands should be considerate and mild towards their wives, trying to rule them with a light hand. Plutarch frowned upon husbands who tried to bring their aristocratic or wealthy wives down to their own level instead of bettering themselves⁷. He also disliked the old practice of husbands' eating separately from their wives, since the latter would indulge in overeating when left on their own⁸. He advises husbands to share their good mood with their wives, but he disapproved of public expression of marital affection⁹. Musonius Rufus states that a married couple should have everything - bodies, souls and money - in common, but he does not specify that the husband should be the real owner, nor does he condone a husband's extra-marital sexual behaviour. But for Plutarch it is obvious that the man should be the owner of the common property in the same way that he is the head of the household¹⁰. Also, he accepts that a husband could indulge in sexual relationships with courtesans or female slaves, especially if he would like to indulge in unorthodox sexual acts; in this way he was doing his wife a favour, because he was protecting her matronly honour¹¹. However, wives were discouraged even from enjoying sexual relations with their husbands and, indeed, they were discouraged from selecting a husband on the basis of sexual attraction¹². It is suggested that some wives used their sexuality to dominate their husbands¹³. The model wife was to be seen only in the company of her husband; preferably she should stay in the house and avoid presenting herself during his absence. She is compared to the moon, which disappears from the proximity of the sun¹⁴. Plutarch insists that wives should adopt the gods of their husbands and avoid any new, strange cults¹⁵.

The Boeotian philosopher gave sound advice on another thorny subject: that of the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. As usual, the young woman had to make concessions and to accept her husband's family as

⁷ Plutarch., *Conjugalia*, 139. 8.

⁸ *Ibid.* 140. 15.

⁹ *Ibid.* 139. 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 140. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 140. 16.

¹² *Ibid.* 139. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.* 139. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 139. 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 140. 19.

her own¹⁶. In general, although Plutarch recognises that the wife has some fundamental rights, and expects her to be educated (citing the well-known poem of Sappho that uneducated women do not share in the gifts of the Muses¹⁷), he presents the marriage as a relationship between unequal parties. Moreover, he is insistent that the stability of the marriage depends on the wife's submission to her husband's rule, and on her total eclipse as an independent person: she had nothing of her own; she should simply share her husband's religion, friends, and even his moods. She should function emotionally not in her own right, but merely as an extension of her husband.

Of course, philosophy simply mirrored the ideals of elite men; it was a reflection of how they wished the world to be, not how it was. Indeed, these texts, produced by conservative intellectuals, are suggestive of an anxiety that wives were no longer as submissive as they used to be. Historical texts, novels and, most of all, inscriptions, tell a different story. And the severity of Augustan legislation suggests that neither elite men, nor their womenfolk, necessarily found marriage such a splendid institution, after all. Dio Cassius, in one of his historical anecdotes, depicts Livia acting as the personification of Stoic womanhood: observing Augustus' inability to sleep, she enquires as to the reasons for his anxiety and offers her advice, on the grounds that as his wife she shares everything with him, she is his closest friend, the only person who cares about his welfare, because it is synonymous with her own. She was also tolerant of his womanising, because this was the correct way for a Roman wife to behave. Livia did not rule over her husband through her sexuality; she simply personified Plutarch's ideal of a good wife - or, at least, she did so on the surface¹⁸.

Dio Chrysostom, in his sixty-first discourse, repeats Plutarch's accusations against wives who dominate their husbands, using the same example: that of foolish, greedy, Helen, who abandoned her submissive husband for the riches of Asia. He blames her sister Clytemnaestra, too. Since Homer, Clytemnaestra had become the hated symbol of the rebellious wife, but Dio also disapproves of Agamemnon for speaking ill of his lawful wife in public: a woman who is a queen and mother of a man's children does not deserve to be publicly humiliated,

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 143. 35-36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 146.

¹⁸ Dio Cassius, LV 14. 3-16. 2.

even if she is troublesome to her husband¹⁹. The passage also implies that it is not proper for a man to compare his wife to his concubine in public.

Law and custom demanded that an adulterous wife be severely punished: women who had been found guilty of adultery lost their status as matrons and had a part of their property confiscated; women of the imperial family risked confiscation of their property, exile, or even the death penalty for alleged adultery. On the other hand, literary texts are less harsh: Dio Cassius seems to disapprove of Domitian's desire to kill his wife, Domitia, on the grounds of adultery, although he makes it plain that she was guilty²⁰. Parmenion's epigram, *A prudent husband*, depicts as a happy man a husband who makes a living by exploiting his wife's sexual affairs²¹, whereas Philodemus' *An inactive lover* records the complaint of a woman about her lover's inactivity, which is made intolerable by the fact that she has had to cheat her husband, and endure the heavy rain²². Achilles Tatius makes little of the adultery committed by Melitte, the rich and beautiful woman from Ephesos who, despite the Stoic arguments, chose Cleitophon as her new husband because of his beauty. She visits the youth in the room in which he was imprisoned by her savage husband who returned 'from the dead', and tenderly seduces him²³. Legally, she is an adulteress, because her husband has returned, but morally she is in the right, because her husband reveals himself as a brute, ready to rape Leucippe, and full of unjustifiable anger at the remarriage of his wife. So she successfully undergoes the chastity test in the river without being drowned, although she had made love to Cleitophon²⁴. Melitte's eagerness for carnal love with her new husband is presented by the author as perfectly normal and her lament when Cleitophon, faithful to Leucippe, refuses to comply, that she had seen *kenotaphia* but not *kenogamia* (sexless marriage), rings true²⁵.

¹⁹ Dio Chrysostom, 61. 13. For archaic names of heroines of Greek mythology, renowned for their wifely fidelity, bestowed upon elite women see SEG XVI, 1959, n° 259 in which the goddess of Argos honours Claudia Philomatheia, the wife of her patron (prostates) with the title «new Hypormnestra», (Hypormnestra was the only Danaid who refused to kill her husband), second century AD.

²⁰ Dio Cassius, 67. 3. 1.

²¹ The Garland of Philip, XII.

²² *Ibid.* VII.

²³ Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Cleitophon, V. XXVI, XXVII, ed. by G.A. Hirsching Erotici Scriptori, Paris, 1853.

²⁴ *Ibid.* VIII. XIV.

²⁵ *Ibid.* V. XIV. 20.

On the other hand, the stereotype of the domineering wife who cuckolds her husband with his slaves was very popular. The wife of the philosopher Xanthus is outraged when her husband presents Aesop, his new slave, to her. She wanted a handsome youth, and Aesop, who was ugly, knew what she was thinking and accused her of desiring a white-skinned blond young slave to serve her in the bath, to gaze upon her when she was naked and commit adultery with her²⁶. She even commits adultery with Aesop when confronted with his enormous penis²⁷. Whenever she is displeased with Xanthus, his wife threatens to leave him, taking her dowry with her²⁸. Literary wives could be so outraged by their husband's infidelity as to act like Medea: Philostratos records an incident in which an outraged woman, catching her husband in bed with her daughter (from a previous marriage), puts out both of daughter's eyes, and one of her husband's, with a hairpin²⁹.

Of course, there is evidence aplenty for happy couples, although celebrations of bachelorhood and misogyny did not disappear: Automedon, in his epigram, *On the blessings of the bachelor*, proclaims that if a man is so mad as to marry, he must be thankful if he buries his wife at once, after acquiring her large dowry³⁰. On the other hand, Apollonides' *Husband and wife die and are buried together* records the death of Heliodoros, who passed away first, and of his wife Diogeneia, who followed him after an hour³¹. It is emphasised that they share their tomb as they shared their bed-chamber. The death of a spouse was usually a lamentable event and as such it is described in the language of inscriptional epitaphs. The wife of Aceilius Theodoros is recorded in his epitaph as staying in her house, raising up her son, and wanting to die³². A bereaved husband, Zosimos, praises his wife, Claudia Arescusa: she has an immortal soul, she was *philandros* and *philoteknos*, she possessed incomparable beauty, she was *sophron*. He also records that he engraved her picture, in her memory, at Patara, Lycia³³. Another woman, Ostia Gavenia Gallita, is similarly praised in her epitaph, in Amastris,

²⁶ Vita Aesopi, W. 31-32.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 75-76.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 49.

²⁹ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* I.x, translated. by F. Connybeare, London 1912.

³⁰ *The garland of Philip*, IV.

³¹ *Ibid.* V.

³² I. Klaudiopolis, n° 72.

³³ *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, (TAM) II, n° 443.

Pontus³⁴. A woman, Aurelia Sophia, set up statues in honour of her husband, Aurelios Hermogenianos Oplon, a most illustrious man, adorned with public and private virtues, 'he lived a modest life', and to their daughter, Oplonis, at Adada, Lycia³⁵.

Nevertheless, the marriages of the elite were strictly arranged to strengthen political alliances and economic ties between the most powerful local families. As A. Rousselle observes: «*The political marriage was an alliance, necessitating a wife and a child. Alongside this, a man could seek pleasure or affection or both in casual affairs or in a stable concubinage which did not interfere with his freedom*»³⁶. Inscriptions, though, continued to record an elite man's sympathy to his wife, a private virtue, alongside his public ones, eg Theophilos, son of Thoinoitos, was generous to the citizens of Iulia Gordos and sympathetic to his wife, Aphia³⁷. According to D. Noy: «*Marriage in Rome and the West, at least for the aristocracy, had much in common with its equivalent in classical Greece and in the eastern Empire: it was arranged at an early age (especially for women) by parents or other older people, usually with more concern for status or wealth than for personal inclination*»³⁸. People, usually women, arranged marriages in a professional or semi-professional way for a fee³⁹. These politically motivated marriages could unite a bride in her early teens and a man old enough to be her grandfather. M. Taliaferro-Boatwright estimates that when Plancia Magna, the well-known civic benefactress from Perge got married, her husband, M. Plancius Verus, could have been either sixty or eighty (!) years old⁴⁰. But Plancia Magna was a member of a family of Italian descent. According to Greek custom, although the husband should be older than the wife, an age difference larger than ten to fifteen years was not acceptable. However, the importance of status persisted. Even in that lyrical, pastoral novel of Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, both hero and heroine turn out to be the offspring of rich families of Mytilene. Thecla and her frustrated would-be husband, in the *Acts of Paul and*

³⁴ SEG, XXXV, 1985, n° 1330.

³⁵ *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes* (IGR) III, n° 371.

³⁶ A. Rousselle, *Porneia*, Cambridge 1992, 97.

³⁷ TAM V. 1, n° 68, 16-17.

³⁸ D. Noy, «Matchmakers and marriage - markets», *Classical Views* XXXIV, n° 9, 1990, 393.

³⁹ Dio Chrysostom, 7th discourse 80. 3; Philostratos, *Lives of the Sophists*, II. 25.

⁴⁰ M. Taliaferro-Boatwright, «Plancia Magna of Perge», in S. B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History*, London 1991, 255.

Thecla, were both the 'first' among women and men, respectively, in their native city of Iconium⁴¹.

Naturally, against such a background of arranged marriages, the phenomenon of men behaving callously towards their wives left its traces in literature and epigraphy. In Rufinus' epigram «*Paula denies that her husband murdered her*» the dead wife is apparently trying to prove her husband's innocence in the face of allegations that he murdered her in order to marry another woman⁴². And in an inscription from a village in Lycaonia, it is recorded on the epitaph of a fifteen year old girl that her husband, Orestes, failed in his duty to erect a tomb for his wife⁴³. The girl, *Matrona*, died in childbirth and her female child died with her. Ramsay, who dates the inscription ca AD 200, comments that «*even pagans did not always do their duty*» and that the tomb was erected by the girl's grandfather and her father-in-law⁴⁴. The phrase: «*she did not achieve her duty in life*» (line 5) is interpreted by Ramsay as: «*she did not achieve the duty of her life for she died trying to give birth to a mere daughter*». But it can be interpreted as simply that she failed to produce children, see lines 12 - 15: «*she left her household half-made and lost the child in her loins.*» Ramsay also comments on the difference between the pre-Roman Anatolian view of the woman's position, and that which prevailed in Roman imperial time, when women could retain their property and widows could remarry⁴⁵.

On the other hand, in a late third century epitaph from Side, Pamphylia, the husband, *Zosimion*, declares his love for his deceased wife, *Romana*, emphasising that she did not *only* become the mother of his children, but also was arch-priestess of the imperial cult with him and wore the purple robes and the golden crowns of the arch-priests. She produced theatrical performances, and lived with him for thirty-four years⁴⁶. The inscription makes it explicit that the wife of an elite man was required not only to give birth to his heirs, but also to share

⁴¹ Acts of *Thecla* and Paul, 33. 3. For an interesting view on marriage based on literary texts, see B. Egger, «Women and marriage in the Greek novels: The Boundaries of Romance», in J. Tatum (ed.), *The search for the Ancient Novel*, Baltimore-London 1991.

⁴² *The garland of Philip*, IX. *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴³ W. M. Ramsay, *The Social Basis of Roman Power in Asia Minor*, Aberdeen 1941, 57.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 57.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 57-8.

⁴⁶ SEG, XXV, 1985, n° 1427.

in his civic duties, using her own economic resources. She was not to remain in the house, supervising servants and her children's upbringing; a new role, which included public appearances, was required of her. This is not the only inscription which refers to a married couple sharing a public office. In another epitaph, that of Icesios, son of Pythion, and of his wife Epicydilla, daughter of Epicydus, it is recorded that they had held the archonship twice, Thasos, first century AD⁴⁷. Also it is recorded that when they got married, he was eighteen years old and she was fifteen, and they lived and died happily. The text confirms the fact that the great age difference common among husbands and wives of the Roman elite was not the rule among the Greek or Hellenised elite. Another epigraphical text, from Maeonia, Lydia, records that Aelius Neos Iulianos held the eponymous office of *stephanephoros* together with his wife, Sabeina, third century AD⁴⁸. This implies that they shared the expenses of the office. Other examples are Tiberius Claudius Platon and his wife Aurelia Ge, and Aurelius Charidemianus Apollonios and his aunt/wife Aurelia Antiochis, who held together the liturgies of *gymnasiarchia* and the funding of wrestling games, (Termessos, Lycia)⁴⁹. In the same city, Marcus Aurelius Meidianos Platonianus, *gymnasiarchos* and son of the city is recorded as *ktistes* (funder) of many public works in co-operation with his wife, Aurelia Artemis, mother of the *boule* and the *demos*⁵⁰. The priest Tiberius Claudius Teimodorus and his wife Tiberia Claudia Pericleia are recorded as the *gymnasiarchoi*⁵¹. The inscriptions mentioned above imply that in the

⁴⁷ Pleket, *Epigraphica* II, Leiden 1969, n° 10, line 6.

⁴⁸ TAM. VI, n° 542.

⁴⁹ TAM. III. I, n° 178 and 179.

⁵⁰ TAM. III. I, n° 122 and 123.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* n° 116. See *Monumenta Asiae Minoris*, (MAMA) VI, n° 74 and 75 in which Marcus Ulpius Carminius Claudianus the younger and his wife Carminia Ammia are recorded as holding the same offices (*stephanephorate*, the priesthood of the Mother of Adrastos) although there is no indication that they held them jointly. Also, see W. M. Ramsay's comments on *Buetin de Correspondance Hellenique*, (BCH) 61, 1938, 35 (two inscriptions which record a married couple, Titus Flavius Varus and Flavia Ammion who shared the same offices), in *The Social Basis of Roman Power in Asia Minor*, Aberdeen 1941, 13-14. Women are recorded as dedicators in a family context eg. TAM. III. I, n° 21. See also SEG XX, 1969, n° 85, in which a *themis* (local game) is recorded as having been funded by a married couple, Aur. Zoilos Chrestos and Aur. Diodoriane Theodora although the title of *agonothetes* is reserved only for the husband. For husband-wife teams striking coins for the emperor and the empress respectively see A. Burnett et al, *Roman Provincial Coinage* I, London 1992, 476.

Roman East, women had to assist their husbands in their public duties and also that they enjoyed the privilege of owning property independently. In a series of sepulchral inscriptions from Asia Minor, a number of women are recorded as owners of the tombs in which their husbands, offspring and, sometimes, relatives and freedmen will be buried. Sometimes the text records the tomb as common property of the couple, eg «*the tomb belongs to Marcus Aurelius Dionysius Artemonianus, arch priest, and to his wife, Tiberia Claudia Antonia Phirmeine, arch-priestess, and also to their children*»⁵². However, in another inscription, it is stated that the tomb belongs to Claudia Adrastella, who gives to her husband, Tiberius Claudius Glycon, and to her son, the right to share it⁵³. Also, Neike, daughter of Tlepos, bestows the same privilege on her husband, Marcus Nicomaechos, and her son⁵⁴. Aelia Tato, from Lycaonia, completed the construction of the tomb, which had started under her husband's supervision⁵⁵. Aurelia Pyrusalla built a protective shelter around her husband's tomb, (Thrace, second/third century AD)⁵⁶. Aurelia Aphia, citizen of Tlos, bought a tomb for herself and her husband⁵⁷. Aurelia Oa alias Cyrilla, daughter of Moleas Oplon, wife of the priest Marcus Aurelius Platon Oplon, bought from her own funds a tomb for one of her foster-sons, (Termessos)⁵⁸. These last two inscriptions confirm that married women in the south-east coastal zone acted independently of their husbands in economic transactions such as the purchase of a tomb. Automatically, the problem of guardianship emerges. What was the status of these women? Some of them, who had acquired Roman citizenship and had given birth to three children, could act without a guardian. Thus Aurelia Ge, *autexusios* (able to act in her own right), with the right of three children, bought a tomb for her foster children, (Termessos)⁵⁹, and Aurelia Eucarpia, daughter of Syros, wife of Claudius Timoleon, bought a tomb for herself and her husband⁶⁰, whereas

⁵² *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* IV, 1898, 110, n° 118, Hierapolis, Phrygia.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 110, n° 119.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 113, n° 130.

⁵⁵ SEG. VI, 1932, n° 424.

⁵⁶ SEG. XXIV, 1969, n° 612.

⁵⁷ TAM. II, n° 631.

⁵⁸ TAM. III. I, n° 671.

⁵⁹ TAM. II, n° 38.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* n° 482.

Aurelia Oa, daughter of Aurelius Thoas, bought a tomb for herself⁶¹. Both women were recorded as *autexusios*. The same phrase is recorded in two other inscriptions⁶². On the other hand, in the sale of her ancestral tomb, Lalla, daughter of Lysimachos, citizen of Myra, Lycia, acted together with her guardian, Quintus, son of Eutychos⁶³.

Although Plutarch and the Stoics expressed the ideal of a wife's property as being part of a common fund under the husband's supervision, under Roman law in cases of marriage *sui juris* the wife could keep her property separate. S. Treggiari observes that: «*Manus* meant that the wife's dowry was absorbed into the pool of the property of her husband or his *paterfamilias* but that she might inherit a share if her husband predeceased her. This custom and philosophical ideas of sharing lie behind approval of non-division of marital property»⁶⁴. Nevertheless, in the imperial era, with legislation progressively changing in favour of women's greater economic independence, wives had their own separate property and provincials who acquired Roman citizenship followed suit, as we have already mentioned. Thus, Marcus Aurelius Meidianus Platonianos Platon, in Termessos, was honoured with the erection of his statue not by one of his own freedmen but by a freedman and agent of his wife, Aurelia Artemis⁶⁵, whereas Aurelia Padamuriane Nanelis, daughter of Opleus Hermeus, wife of Pancrates, erected a tomb for the freedmen of her husband⁶⁶. Both pieces of evidence prove that husband and wife owned slaves separately, although each spouse could provide patronage to the other's slaves and freedmen. Thus, Treggiari's thesis that it was generally held that a husband and wife living in the same house would share the services of each other's slaves and even freedmen, seems to be valid⁶⁷. Nevertheless, the consent of the husband was sometimes required when the wife wanted to alienate a part of her property eg in the inscriptions recording bequests of vineyards by Iulia Eudia, daughter of Euteleinos, to the temple of Asclepios, at Mantinea, Arcadia, the consent of her husband, Gaius Iulius

⁶¹ *Ibid.* n° 669.

⁶² *Ibid.* n° 705 and 714.

⁶³ *Sylloges Inscriptionum Graecarum*, (SIG), n° 1234.

⁶⁴ S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges From the Time of Cicero to the time of Ulpian*, Oxford 1991, 365.

⁶⁵ TAM. III. I, n° 123.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* n° 649.

⁶⁷ S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, Oxford 1991, 374.

Strobilus, is recorded as well⁶⁸. Thus Treggiari's argument, that: «*even where the property of the wife was clearly distinguished as hers, the husband might feel himself a quasi-owner*», seems to be valid⁶⁹. Even in a sepulchral inscription from Termessos, a slave, Numenios Artemon, records the consent not only of his mistress, Aurelia Procle, for buying a tomb, but also that of Aurelius Hermianus, who was presumably her husband⁷⁰.

An inscription from Astypalaea, ca 6 BC, gives further evidence for the married couple's co-ownership of and common responsibility for house and slaves⁷¹. It is a record of litigation against the late Eubulos and his wife, Tryphera, who were accused of the murder of another man, also called Eubulos. This person, together with his brother, had besieged the couple's house, and had verbally assaulted them, so savagely that they ordered their slave to empty their chamber pot over the assailants⁷². But the slave had thrown the pot as well and had killed Eubulos⁷³. As the owners were responsible for their slave's actions, the couple were liable for trial on a charge of manslaughter.

Treggiari mentions that all sorts of business transactions might take place between husband and wife, and that if one damaged the other's property, he or she could be prosecuted⁷⁴. This seemed to be the case in Lydia, as a confession-inscription from Katakekaumene indicates⁷⁵. These confession inscriptions usually record punishments inflicted by the god Men on people who disobeyed his rules or committed various sins (from poisoning a son-in-law to defrauding debtors). They can be dated roughly from the early second century AD to the end of the third century AD. The specific text is a dedication made by Syntyche, wife of Theogenes, who had been given a hyacinth stone by her husband to keep in her house, and after its disappearance she was accused of theft and subjected to rigorous interrogation. As the authors of the article comment: «*Syntyche's appeal to the god seems to point to painful trials*»⁷⁶. Thus a wife could be held

⁶⁸ *Inscriptiones Graecae*, (IG) V2, n° 269 and 270.

⁶⁹ S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 365.

⁷⁰ TAM. III. I, n° 663.

⁷¹ SIG. N° 780.

⁷² *Ibid.* Lines 20-3.

⁷³ *Ibid.* lines 25-6.

⁷⁴ S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 377-8.

⁷⁵ G. Petzl-H. Malay, «A new Confession Inscription from the Katakekaumene», *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, (GRBS) 28, 1987, 459-72.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 466.

responsible for stealing from her husband. Another problem is posed by the phrase *en te oikia autes*, which most probably means that the wife owned the house or she was owner of a separate house. The alternative interpretation, that the phrase could indicate the *gynaikonitis*, the women's part of the house, which is proposed by the authors of the article, does not seem convincing. (There is no reason to use the word *oikia* to characterise the women's part of the house.)

More evidence for the husband's right to act as quasi-owner of his wife's property is derived from manumission inscriptions in a first century BC, fragmented inscription from Amphissa, Central Greece, in which a female slave, Epictesis, is manumitted by her mistress, Nicaso. It is the mistress' husband, Eubulidas, who has the right to give orders and to punish the slave during her period of *paramone*; this is interpreted by A. Keramopoulos as usurpation of the wife's rights by the husband due to women's political inferiority⁷⁷. In a much later inscription (AD 224), from Leucopetra, Macedonia, Aurelia Dracontis records the manumission of slaves via dedication to the Mother of gods, but she explicitly states that she executed her husband's order⁷⁸. And, in another inscription from Leucopetra, ca AD 218, a woman, Claudia Symboule, is recorded as having presented the documents of the sale in which she purchased her slaves, as a kind of mortgage for pecuniary assistance which the goddess (ie the temple) had offered in the past to her husband, Claudius Agathon⁷⁹. And finally, in a confession-text from Lydia, the gods are recorded as demanding the proscription of the *peculium* of Caenis, the wife of Glycon, who had failed to pay his debt⁸⁰. Here, the *peculium* is a kind of dowry: the income goes to the husband, but the capital might come back to the wife or her father⁸¹.

⁷⁷ A Keramopoulos, «Apelephtherotikae Epigraphae ex Amphissis», *Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίδα*, Arch. Eph. 67, 1904, 122-3.

⁷⁸ Ph. Petsas, «Oe Chronologimenes Epigraphes apo tin Leukopetra», *Praktika tou H Diethnous Synedriou Ellenikes kai Latinikes Epigraphikes*, Athens 1984, 287.

⁷⁹ SEG. XXXIV, 1984, n° 307.

⁸⁰ SEG. XXV, 1985, n° 1207. See also SEG. XXXV, 1985, n° 1099, especially Pleket's comment that 'these estates may have been senatorial property which Arcilia Frontica brought into her marriage to L. Valerius Puplus Iulianus», 301.

⁸¹ S.Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 363-4.

On the other hand, a wife could become one of her husband's heirs, usually with their children, although in rare cases she could inherit the whole estate⁸². Both cases are recorded in inscriptions from the Eastern part of the Empire. An early fourth century AD inscription, from Anchialos, Thrace, is the epitaph of a soldier, Flavius Zenis, who had designated as his heirs his wife, Aurelia Maretima, and his only son, Nominatus, excluding his three surviving daughters (who would presumably be given dowries)⁸³. Another inscription, from Serres, Macedonia, records that Ammia, daughter of Menandrus, wife and heir of Titus Arrius, is the *epimeletes* of his tomb⁸⁴. The setting up of statues by wives in honour of their deceased husbands was a very common practice, eg Theodote, daughter of Hecatomons, set up a statue of her husband, Theudas, son of Menandros, who held a variety of offices in Smyrna, out of a sense of piety towards her husband and for her own consolation⁸⁵.

Artemidorus' *Oneirokritika* contains many references to the relationship between husband and wife. Usually, they confirm that the wife was under her husband's authority: if a woman dreams of a heart, it signifies her husband, since he is the one who exercises control over her body⁸⁶. In dreams, men see prospective wives as helmets and shields, expensive ones signifying rich, attractive wives, and inexpensive ones, poor, ugly wives⁸⁷. Fighting with a Thracian gladiator signifies that the dreamer will marry a wife who is rich and crafty, whereas fighting against a gladiator who has silver arms signifies that the dreamer will marry a wife of high qualities, rich, faithful, a good housekeeper, and obedient⁸⁸. But if a man dreams that he fights against a *retiarius*, he will marry a poor, wanton wife; if with an *eques* his wife will be rich, noble, but of limited intelligence. An *essedarius* signifies that the dreamer's wife will be lazy and stupid, a *provocator* that she will be attractive and intelligent but flirtatious,

⁸² Dig. 31. 89. 7. Also, see the case of a wife acting as executor of her husband's will; she distributed fixed amounts of money to various social groups of the city, during the agonistic festival, which she had had founded with her late husband, SEG. XLV, 1997, n° 1187, Lycia.

⁸³ SEG. XXIV, 1969, n° 911, lines 4-5.

⁸⁴ SEG. XXX, 1980, n° 615. Site is his kleronomos (= heiress).

⁸⁵ I. Smyrna, II. I, n° 122.

⁸⁶ Artemidorus, I. 44.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* II. 31.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* II. 32.

and the two-sworded gladiator that she will be the worst kind of spouse, a poisoner, or a malicious or ugly one⁸⁹. Later on, a tomb is interpreted as signifying a wife, since she has room inside her for whole bodies⁹⁰. A dream of walking on the sea is a good one for a man who is thinking of getting married because it signifies that he will rule his wife⁹¹.

Adultery plays a prominent part in Artemidorus' book of dreams. As A. J. Pomeroy observes: «*The master of the household holds a fairly brutal sway over all, with the exception of his wife - to dream of striking a member of the household is good, except if one dreams of hitting one's wife since that predicts adultery. In fact, to be insulted by one's wife is a distinct blow to one's social status. A man who dreamt that this occurred to him was the next day insulted by a social inferior*»⁹². Indeed, a man who was warned by Pan, in his dream, that his wife would poison him, was cuckolded by her - an adulteress is as destructive for her husband as a murderess⁹³.

From these passages it emerges that many men of the period were anxious to acquire a wife who had money, beauty and high morals, and also that they were concerned about their ability to maintain control, particularly sexual control, over their wives. A very important aspect of marriage was that it should lead to increased wealth, but it is made clear that excessive dowries could make wives excessively arrogant, and thus they could pose a threat to male authority. This anxiety about the husband's superiority to his wife is expressed in other literary texts, eg Plutarch's *Advice to bride and groom*, as well as in inscriptions: in a long column of advice from Cyzicos (a kind of citizen's guide), it is recommended that, among other things, a man should rule over his wife⁹⁴. Although the inscription dates from the third century BC, it is very similar to the Stoic's concept of uxorial harmony.

Roman law enabled women to initiate divorce, although as S Treggiari observes, social reasons could make them reluctant to use this legal privilege⁹⁵.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* II. 32.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* II.60.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* III.16.

⁹² In «Status and Status-Concern in the Graeco-Roman Dream-books», *Ancient Society*, (Anc. Soc.), 1991, 62.

⁹³ Artemidorus, III. 71.

⁹⁴ I. Kyzikos, II, n° 2, line 31.

⁹⁵ S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 444.

Plutarch's advice to the bride to avoid initiating a divorce out of jealousy, because she would help her rival instead of making her feel sorry, implies that a husband's infidelity was not easily forgiven by wives. We have already mentioned that the wife of Xanthus, Aesop's master, threatened to leave him and take back her dowry more than once. Artemidorus refers to a husband whose wife had been living without him for a long time⁹⁶. Attitudes to wife-beating varied, though S Treggiari observes that violence against the body of a wife did not constitute such a serious reason for divorce on her part, and she mentions that there is evidence from Christian Africa of wives who tolerated physical abuse inflicted on them by their husbands⁹⁷. Indeed, B D Shaw paints a very bleak picture of family life in St Augustine's native village, Thagaste, with violent husbands beating their wives, like his father who used to do so to his mother Monnica for no serious reason⁹⁸. But he too admits that women who owned property could not be treated so badly. Roman women of the elite had the power to avoid maltreatment through their dowries and the protection available to them from their natal family. As Artemidorus and the Stoics demonstrate, wife-beating was not a good sign; wives were subordinate to their husbands, but not in the same way as slaves or children. The Stoic ideal of *homonoia* between spouses could not include physical abuse of the wife.

On the subject of the couple's co-operation, we have to observe that two different aspects arise: on the one hand some husbands preferred to take their wives with them, even in military camps or dangerous provinces. We have already mentioned emperors and provincial governors who were accompanied by their wives. Also, in Epiphaneia's epitaph, it is stated that she travelled a lot by land and sea, accompanying her father and her first husband who were both merchants. On the other hand, some wealthy men preferred to leave their wives behind to look after their property. For Artemidorus, such women suffered a kind of semi-masculinisation, obliged as they were to act as men on the social level.

Men's sexual freedom with prostitutes and female and male slaves apart, and despite Stoic warnings against sexual love as being too important a reason for marriage, sexual warmth was a basic component of a good marriage. For a

⁹⁶ Artemidorus, IV. 20.

⁹⁷ S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 430.

⁹⁸ B.D.Shaw, «The Family in Late Antiquity: The Bxperience of Augustine», *Past and Present* 115, 1987, 30-2.

husband, his wife was the primary sexual partner, especially if he was of limited means. Artemidorus implies that married women were keen on beautifying their bodies by removing hair so as to become desirable for their husbands⁹⁹. Men could enjoy the pleasures of love not only with their mistresses, but with their wives too¹⁰⁰. Elsewhere it is stated that nothing warms the body as well as a fire and wife¹⁰¹, whereas in another passage, the bedroom signifies the wife¹⁰². Plutarch alludes to this aspect of married life, although he seems to be at pains to persuade wives whose bodies have suffered from pregnancies to give in to their husband's sexual demands and stop complaining. P Walcot rejects the idea that romantic love was accepted as the basis of marriage in antiquity and he tries very hard to make it understandable to his readers who have been brought up with the idea that personal choice is the ideal way of getting married¹⁰³. He concludes that real romantic love could develop only between brother and sister, as siblings of different sex could not compete due to their different spheres of action. He bases his arguments on literary texts, mostly classical, with only brief references to the imperial era. Texts and inscriptions from the late Hellenistic era to the fourth century AD portray many happy couples, though one should be aware that in antiquity people glossed over their personal difficulties and the tendency, as it is today, was to beautify and idealise conformist ideas. As R Lattimore observes: «What we are presented with first and last is the picture of an ideally happy family; devoted husbands and wives, affectionate parents and obedient children, even kind masters and grateful slaves and freedmen. The virtues, especially those which go to make up a family, are magnified; we have no precise reminiscence, but the elaboration and adaptation of an ideal»¹⁰⁴. He also mentions that although women were always the foundation of family life, in late Greek times and under the Roman empire they are no longer taken so much for granted.

Anxiety over one's future wife's status was evident in the dreams recorded by Artemidorus: the conferring of a *chlamys* on an unwed man signified marriage,

⁹⁹ Artemidorus, I. 41.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* I. 73.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* I. 73.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* II. 10.

¹⁰³ P. Walcot, «Romantic Love and True Love: Greek Attitudes to Marriage», *Anc. Soc.* 18, 1987, 5-33.

¹⁰⁴ R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, Urbana 1962, 99.

and its colour symbolised the bride's status - white for a freeborn woman, purple for one of a very aristocratic family, black for a freedwoman¹⁰⁵. Partridges usually signify ungrateful women who are not kind to the men who support them¹⁰⁶. Marriage to a prostitute was a great disaster¹⁰⁷. Shameful images of wives were bad omens: a man who dreamt that his wife was sitting, in purple, in a brothel, was a tax collector whose job was profitable but rather immoral¹⁰⁸. Another one dreamt that his wife lifted up her clothes and showed him her genitals; in real life she caused him a lot of suffering¹⁰⁹. A husband dreamt that he offered his wife as a sacrificial victim, cut her flesh into pieces, sold them and profitted from the sale¹¹⁰. The allegory of prostitution is evident; the man lived on the money he earned as his wife's pimp.

Wives, especially if they were married to influential men with careers in politics, risked their property, freedom or life whenever their husbands were prosecuted. As A J Marshall observes: «It was thus adultery trials in particular which could carry a political significance equal to that of the major criminal attaching to public service, and women of high rank or kinship to one family (that of the princeps) became more likely to face trial before the senate on this charge to the extent that they could become a focus for political ambition or disaffection»¹¹¹.

We have already referred to the case of Tryphera who, together with her husband, was held responsible for the murder of a citizen; Kathleen Atkinson discussed the lady's legal status as a person who though lacking Roman citizenship, had her case brought before Augustus¹¹². Sometimes, the death penalty imposed by a tyrannical emperor on a *paterfamilias* seemed to include his wife, too. According to H Müller this was the case with Claudia Basilo, a lady who had been *theoros* of the Olympia at Ephesos and priestess in Synnada: in

¹⁰⁵ Artemidorus, I. 44.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* II. 46.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* IV. 53.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* IV. 42.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* IV. 44.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* V. 2.

¹¹¹ A. J. Marshall, «Women on Trial Before the Roman Senate», *Classical Views*, 9, 1990, 337.

¹¹² K. Atkinson, *Reflections of the Roman Rule and Law*, The Queen's University, (New Series, n° 28), Belfast, 1965, 13-6.

all probability, she was executed with her husband, Iulius Proculus, by Commodus¹¹³.

Husband and wife shared economic responsibilities: Beothos and Clete are recorded as *misthotai choriou* in a memorial inscription set up for their son, Epicletos, and niece Valliane¹¹⁴. F R Trombley dates the inscription to the late third century AD and suggests that the couple were tax farmers or contractors and not tenant farmers¹¹⁵. His argument seems to be valid if we consider that tenant farmers were desperately poor, without resources to set up an inscription. But what did happen to women when their husbands died? Could they continue to manage the property themselves in a society in which brutal force prevailed upon law? The answer is different for women of different classes. For widows of humble status, the situation was perilous. We have only to look in Egyptian papyri collections to find petitions to the prefect from desperate widows: eg Aurelia Artemis, wife of a shepherd, had had to watch, powerless, as her husband's patron seized the opportunity of his employee's death to steal a number of his sheep, c AD 280, Theadelphia, Egypt¹¹⁶. Judith Evans-Grubbs observes that widows of limited means, usually of ex-servile status, could become dependent on their sole male slave to the point that they set up house together, even if this de facto marriage was not recognised by Roman law as legally valid¹¹⁷. The fact that a woman, Euodia, daughter of Symmachos, being herself a citizen of Mantinea, set free her own daughter and slave, Elpis, Mantinea, Peloponnesos, second century AD, implies that such unions between low-class free women and slaves were not unusual. M Guarducci comments: «Costei era nata, evidentemente dell'unione di sua madre con uno schiavo»¹¹⁸. From the second century BC onwards, inscriptions record widows as sole heirs of their husband's property: Megiste, daughter of Apollodoros, is recorded as *kleronomos* (of her husband's property)¹¹⁹. But

¹¹³ Helmut Müller, «Claudia Basilo und ihre Verwandtschaft», *Chiron* 10, 1980, 457-84. Also see M. Kaajava, «new City Patroness?», *Tyche* 5, 1990, 34, note 40.

¹¹⁴ MAMA. I, n° 292.

¹¹⁵ F.R.Trombley, «The Christianization of Phrygia» in his *Hellenic Religion and Christianization*, vol. 2, Leiden 1994, 99.

¹¹⁶ See, R.S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, Princeton 1993, 132.

¹¹⁷ J. Evans-Grubbs, «Marriage More Shameful than Adultery: Slave-Mistress Relationships, mixed marriages and early Roman law», *Phoenix* 47. 2, 1993, 139

¹¹⁸ EG., Rome 1987, 357.

¹¹⁹ I. Priene n° 255, lines 1-5. See, also, my article, «Independent women in Roman East», *Eirene* 1997, 81-95.

sometimes, a widow's hereditary rights were limited by concubinage: C Wayne-Tucker mentions one inscription from Delphi, dating from the late first century BC, which records the release of the freedwoman Eisias and her son born during her *paramone*, from that obligation and the return of the sum of money paid by her to purchase her freedom. Moreover, both of them are designated as co-heirs of the patron, Cleomantis, albeit in a secondary position, after his wife¹²⁰. In an inscription from Attaleia, Asia Minor, the testament of Euarestos Capiton Phocas was inscribed by his wife Ammia Tyllia, but it is not stated that she is his heir¹²¹. Unfortunately, very few inscriptions record women who are widows. The benefactress from Termessos, Atalanta, was a widow¹²². As she had promised to donate grain in times of need, we can safely conclude that she was an important landowner. Epigraphic evidence for other women does not indicate such a high status. Phaenarete, widow of Pasiphilos, manumitted her female slave, Thynomia, Larissa, Thessaly, 44 AD¹²³. But even relatively poor people were slaveowners in antiquity. A number of women owners of tombs are recorded as being widows in Termessos, Lycia¹²⁴. Usually, they were also freedwomen and *paroikoi*¹²⁵, or relatives of freedmen¹²⁶. But elsewhere, it seems that they were freeborn¹²⁷, eg Sanda, daughter of Hermaeus Potamon, a widow, constructed the tomb for herself¹²⁸.

Widows of wealthy men could be left as owners of great properties. Flaviane Philocrateia made a donation of 1,000 Attic drachmas in honour of her husband and herself, to fund the *elaiothesia* for a three day festival, Parthicapolis, Thrace, 241 AD¹²⁹. It was not uncommon for wealthy widows to marry younger men.

¹²⁰ C.Wayne-Tucker, «Women and Manumission Inscriptions at Delphi», *TAPA* 112, 1982, 231.

¹²¹ EG. III, Rome 1974, 307. See also a second/third century inscription from Nigrita, Macedonia in which a basilica is built by the bequest left to the city by Cointus Philippos, through his wife and heiress Julia, SEG. XXXI, 1981, n° 639. For a similar inscription see XXX, 1980, n° 615.

¹²² TAM. I, n° 4 and 62.

¹²³ EG. III, 289.

¹²⁴ In TAM. III. I, nos 249, 284, 322, 335, 374, 558, 585, 645, 750.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* n° 284 and 374.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* a daughter, in n° 558.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* nos 249, 322, 335, 585, 645, 750.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* n° 750.

¹²⁹ EG. III, 261.

The well-known example of Ismenadora and Bacchion is discussed by P Walcot¹³⁰, who undermines the romantic background of Plutarch's story by suggesting that perhaps young Bacchion had his eye on the lady's property, and draws a parallel with another well-known example, that of Apuleius, who married the wealthy widow, Pudentilla, in second century AD Africa, and found himself being accused of sorcery¹³¹. In a more satirical, almost vitriolic tone, Lucian pours scorn on amorous, wealthy hags who risk being poisoned by youthful lovers impatient for their inheritance¹³². The stereotype of the merry widow is personified by Melitte in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon* and here the widow's behaviour does not attract an indignant outpouring of righteous moral disapproval. Before the influence of Christianity was well-established, Graeco-Roman society did not encourage a state of permanent widowhood. On the contrary, R Lane-Fox observes: «In the Imperial period, indeed, the Roman marriage laws urged the widows of citizen husbands to re-marry within two years»¹³³. According to the same author, the term *univira* did not designate a one-man wife, but a woman who remained faithful to her husband throughout their marriage. It seems that a young, marriageable widow, childless and wealthy, could and should be re-married: her wealth had to be passed on to the next generation.

But even a widow with children could re-marry; perhaps her second marriage was dictated by her natal family's politics, eg. Aurelia Rhodus, daughter of Hermaeus, son of Dionysodorus, a citizen of Olympus, is recorded as having constructed a tomb for herself, her husband, Demetrius, their children and grandchildren, her *trophime Olympios*, her parents, and her second husband, Macarius, who was *oikonomos* of the Lycians¹³⁴. Widows could act as de facto heads of household even in classical Athens, according to Virginia Hunter¹³⁵. Although she is at pains to prove her thesis that widows could be *kyriae* of their property as long as they did not re-marry, she has to admit that the exclusion of

¹³⁰ P. Walcot, «On Widows and Their Reputation in Antiquity», *Symbola Osloenses* 64, 1991, 113-15.

¹³¹ Ibid., 16-8. For a new evaluation of Pudentilla's case, see: E. Fantham, «Aemilia Pudentilla; or the wealthy widow's» in R. Hauley-B. Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, London-N.York 1997, 220-233.

¹³² Lucian, *A professor of public speaking*, 25.

¹³³ R. Lane-Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, S. Francisco 1986, 344.

¹³⁴ TAM. II, n° 1163.

women from public life, even from lawcourts, made their dependence on a male relative an absolute pre-requisite of survival. But in the imperial period, notwithstanding such limitations as were imposed by guardianship, women of wealth could defend their interests as widows. Q Andersen observes that 'the recognition of widows as a disruptive force is manifest in St Paul's first letter to Timothy, 5.3-14. Indeed, widows make up a category with which it is often difficult to deal. In the social structure they will often begin to play the male role'¹³⁶. A similar line of thought is expressed by S C Humphreys: 'A widow living by herself and managing her own affairs was more obviously autarchic: as Julian Pitt-Rivers has pointed out (1977, pp 44-5 & 80-3), widows are structurally male in many respects and therefore anomalous and dangerous'¹³⁷. Nevertheless, in oratory, Thucydides' ideal of widows buried in silence prevailed. Women's modesty must be protected, according to the third century AD rhetor Menander: 'With a man, no blame is conveyed by an address made without preliminary preparation, but with a woman it is necessary to win the audience over in advance by demonstrating her excellence'. Indeed, the wife is advised to follow the example of good women of former times, and of the heroines¹³⁸. A Momigliano compared the case of the aristocratic pagan, Sosipatra, recorded in Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists* to that of Macrina, the virgin sister of Gregory of Nyssa: 'Sosipatra was a wife and mother before turning to spiritual life as a widow. But even as a widow her spiritual life was disturbed, and therefore her leadership imperilled, by a profane love which seemed induced by magic practices and had to be chased away by appropriate counter measures. For Macrina there was an engagement with an aristocratic boy at the proper age of twelve, but when the boy died prematurely she refused any other offer of marriage ... Here the identification of engagement with marriage is patent: and the mystical interpretation of the Roman quality of *univira* is equally precise'¹³⁹. Macrina, as an heiress of considerable wealth, even though her parents' estate was divided

¹³⁵ V. Hunter, «Women's Authority in Classical Athens», *Classical Views* 33, n° 8, 1989, 39-48.

¹³⁶ Q. Andersen, «Widows, City and Thucydides», *Symbola Osloenses* 62, 1987, 41.

¹³⁷ S. C. Humphreys, *The Family, Women and Death*, London 1983, 47.

¹³⁸ D. A. Russell- N.G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, Oxford 1981, 177.

¹³⁹ A. Momigliano, «The Life of St. Macrina by Gregory of Nyssa», in J. W. Eadie- J. Ober (eds.), *The Craft of the Ancient Historian*, New York- London 1985, 445-6.

between nine children, transferred that wealth to the monastery she founded¹⁴⁰. In the fourth century AD, widowed women enjoyed economic authority if they belonged to the elite: the mother of the pagan rhetor Libanius was the de facto guardian of her son, and she supervised his education. (She preferred to let him relax in the countryside instead of studying)¹⁴¹. Libanius even forgave her for having sold his property and he refers to the purchaser's anxiety because he thought that Libanius would try to invalidate the sale either during his mother's lifetime or after her death¹⁴². Averil Cameron mentions the case of the mother of Gregory of Nyssa, Basil and Macrina, who was left a widow with estates to run¹⁴³. Aelius Aristides, in his praise for Roman oration, observes that since the Romans took over, people with Roman citizenship could marry other Roman citizens from different cities without producing 'illegitimate' children¹⁴⁴. On the contrary, the offspring of such marriages could hold double citizenship and could benefit both their father's and their mother's cities, eg the mother of the famous benefactor Opramoas, was citizen of the city of Corydallis. Opramoas, son of Apollonius, honours his mother Aglais, alias Aristocila daughter of Hermaeus, citizen of both Rhodiapolis and Corydallis, a modest and virtuous lady, a descendant of hipparchs and generals who has been honoured many times by her cities etc.¹⁴⁵. Elsewhere, Opramoas is recorded as bequeathing an estate in Corydallis, and in all probability, he inherited this estate from his mother, as R. van Bremen suggests¹⁴⁶. Menander the rhetor advises the prospective writers of treatises of marriage to comment on the fact that children who will be produced from marriages will be charitable benefactors to the city, and also that the advantage of marriage lies in the preservation and increase of wealth, and most importantly in the procreation of children who will be benefactors of their city

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 454.

¹⁴¹ *Opera Libanii*, ed by R. Forster, Lipsing 1963, Oration, I. 4.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* I. 59.

¹⁴³ A. Cameron, «Virginity as Metaphor» in A. Cameron (ed.), *History as Text*, London 1989, 197.

¹⁴⁴ P. Aelius Aristides, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Ch. Behr, Leiden, 1981, Oration, XXVI, 102.

¹⁴⁵ TAM. II, n° 916.

¹⁴⁶ TAM. II, n° 578. See R. Van Bremen, «Women and Wealth», in A. Kuhrt-A. Cameron (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity*, London 1983, 229.

and will organise games¹⁴⁷. Early Christianity with its insistence on perpetual virginity, its disapproval of second marriage and therefore its advocacy of perpetual widowhood, severed these marriage links between cities and put at stake the whole social frame of the Graeco-Roman city.

ABSTRACT

The subject of the aforementioned article is the new meaning which was given to the institution of marriage by the Stoic philosophers of the early Roman imperial period, which was also mirrored in the legal and epigraphical texts of the Principate.

Both the less known literary texts (i.e. Artemidorus' «*Oneirocritica*») and the inscriptions, private and public, present a new ideal of marriage : it seems that the Roman elite wife had had the obligation to help, financially, her husband to shoulder his public burden, sharing with him religious and public offices, whereas her role as sexual partner and friend of her husband had been upgraded.

The greater legal freedom which many elite women enjoyed in the Principate, due to imperial legislation, which gave privileges to mothers (starting with Augustus' grant of the *ius trium liberorum*), enabled wealthy women, even if they were of humbler descent, to become successful «businesswomen» and administrators of their own property, despite the prevalence of the sexism in Roman law, whose purpose was to keep female-owned property intact, for the sake of theirs and their husbands' male kin.

Widows, if they belonged to the upper echelons of society, could prosper whereas the poor ones had to struggle in order to survive in a male-dominated society. Christianity, with its ascetic ideals, gave a new, elevated, status to widows who refused to remarry and, also, to eternal virgins.

¹⁴⁷ D. A. Russell and N.G. Wilson, 151 and 157. See an inscription from Kidrama in Caria, in which Nana, the daughter of Menandros Nearchos, a man who was *stephanephoros* and *gymnasiarchos*, was honoured by both Kidrama (for vague reasons) and Apollonia for her *euschemon epidemia* (for her beautiful, pleasant stay) which implies that she bestowed some kind of benefaction upon that city, J. and L. Robert, *La Carie*, Paris 1954, 364, n°186.